

Introduction

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DR. JAMES A. PERKINS: The International Council for Educational Development is pleased to be a partner in this important meeting. We have arranged this panel discussion, which is made up of trustees and friends of the Council. We selected the topic and arranged for the presentations and are extremely pleased to share our views with this distinguished company.

The title and topic, "The University and the Corporation," or more generally, "Higher Education and the Business Community" was selected for three important reasons. The first is that a constructive relationship between the university and the corporation is today a matter of great importance to both parties. The second is that this relationship is becoming extremely significant to most countries, particularly in the industrial world. And the third is that it is a relationship, in both its advantages and disadvantages, that has not been given the careful attention it deserves.

A constructive relationship is important for both parties. From the point of view of the university, the corporation represents an important source of funds at a time when government financial support has either reached a ceiling or is actually declining. The economic successes of the business communities in both developed and developing countries has produced a pool of substantial profits which the university finds an appropriate target to meet its financial needs. The university also sees the business community as a high priority place for the employment of its graduates. Indeed, the success in placing their students is fast becoming one of the criteria for judging the success of individual universities and higher education as a whole.

From the point of view of business, the health and vitality of the university, both in the education of its future employees and as the source of creative ideas which can be used by business to improve its own products and activities, is critical. So there is a symbiotic relationship of mutual

dependence and development which underlies the need for discussing this topic at this conference.

The second reason, already suggested, that makes this topic relevant to a meeting sponsored by the International Association of University Presidents is that in one degree or another most countries have to face the need for such a relationship while being carefully attentive to the advantages and disadvantages that come from its development. Surely the disadvantages will prevail if both parties do not openly examine the impact of this relationship on their own unique roles and responsibilities.

The third reason, also already suggested, is that the topic itself has not received the attention it deserves from academic research persons, academic administrators, or enlightened members of the business community. It is, of course, true that universities have, in many cases, developed special programs for the training of future members of the business community. The schools of business, either within or attached to universities, have long been established as important contributions of the academic world to the vitality of their own enterprises. Only recently, however, has there been any careful consideration of the wider interests in the university in constructive relationships with the corporation and even less attention by the corporations to the need for vital and constructive university institutions.

There is another level which suggests the importance of a mature relationship between the university and the corporation. Wise men have long known that it is important for the academic world to have its research and its teaching enriched by the experience of its society and institutions that must learn how to make use of the ideas developed within the academy. In my country, our success in our agricultural development is directly traceable to the fact that there has been a close interaction between those teaching in the many disciplines in the agricultural schools: the farmers who run the farms, the business enterprises that market the products and the governments that oversee the national interest in this chain of connections. In short, both teaching and research in the university is improved by an appropriate connection with the business world which, we have already discovered, is also true of public institutions.

The business world, in turn, has come to learn how dependent it is in the long run on the basic research carried on in the university which gives more elbow room for creative thinking than is frequently possible in the in-house research done within the companies themselves. In evolving ways in which this business interest in basic research can be best articulated, different countries at different stages have devised different institutional arrangements. But it has become reasonably clear that the long-run interests of any successful enterprise requires the detachment that the university can provide, both in research and the development of the critical minds upon which creativity so fundamentally depends.

Another interest of the university in this relationship is that support from the business community can provide a necessary counterbalance to the influence of governments which, from time to time, have pressured the university to adhere to certain short-run political objectives of the government in power. In my country, we have come to believe that the diversity of sources of funding may be one of the best guarantees of university autonomy so needed to protect the academic freedom of its scholars, the quality of its teaching, and the independence of its research.

Of course, there are problems in this relationship. After all, the university and the corporation have different purposes and therefore some different values. The corporation must make a profit -- a circumstance which cannot be too long deferred. Its interests are bound to be somewhat on a shorter time scale than that of the academic world where the development of ideas takes time. When it comes to teaching, the university (at least the important ones) is both the creature of society and its important critic. This double role complicates both its relationship with government and with the corporation. Those who provide financial support frequently find it difficult to accept the criticism of those who receive their funds. But again, mature societies have come to learn that this double relationship with society is built into the very nature of the university and the tensions that arise are important for the health of society itself. For the corporation the relationship also has its difficulties. The university is the source of some of its most important future leaders and so it has an interest in the nature of their academic preparation.

But this runs immediately counter to the notions of university autonomy and academic freedom. So here, too, the corporation has a problem that only experience and a sophisticated understanding of the merits will keep the relationship on the track.

Finally, as my general comments, running through our discussion will be a recognition that the intellectual world has fast outgrown its academic institutions. Sophisticated research persons are now to be found in both government and business. Associations of higher physics as well as public administration find their members in all three institutional points of our social triangle. And they, naturally enough, find much in common. This commonality of interest leads to sophisticated relationships between the institutions which employ them.

All of us, I am sure, have attended meetings with the professionals in some particular field of knowledge who find it increasingly easy to understand the particular role of their colleagues in other institutions. This new mobile society of professionals acts as a way in which the interests of the institutional parties involved can be examined at a level higher than that of the institution itself. So the government, the corporation, and the university are being knitted together by the fact that all of them are being increasingly managed by university-trained people who now have learned how to learn, have learned how to deal with change, have learned how to deal with the application of knowledge, and have learned how to carry on society's business with the appropriately constructive connections of the institutions that employ them.

With this background, you can see that we will be dealing for the rest of the day with an extremely complex but important topic. To begin with, we have decided to present the subject in four geographical areas so you will be hearing first about Europe, then after lunch about Japan, followed by the presentation about Latin America, and, finally, the United States. In each of these four geographical areas, we have asked the panelists to present their comments under the headings of research collaboration, institutional support at the university and the employment of university graduates. So we have married both a country and topical approach. It will require your close attention to follow this order of events.